



THE SENATE SPOTLIGHT

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Georgia State Senate

January 2006

2006 Legislative Session begins

Lt. Gov. Taylor and leadership call Senate to order for 2006 session

Lieutenant Governor Mark Taylor and members of the Georgia State Senate gathered on Monday, January 9, 2006, as the Senate convened for the 2006 legislative Session. Opening day '06 gave Senators the chance to assemble with their colleagues in the state senate, and to welcome the newest member of the Senate, Senator Ed Tarver of the 22nd.



"It's not every second year of the General Assembly's session that we have the opportunity to welcome a new member, but today we are welcoming Ed and Beverly Tarver to our family, and we are very excited they are joining us," said Lt. Gov. Taylor. After the Secretary of the Senate read a directive declaring Sen. Tarver's election to the Senate, his introduction was met with a standing ovation from the entire Senate Chamber.

servant, and we appreciate him very much."

President Pro Tempore Eric Johnson then spoke to the Senate, saying, "I join the President in welcoming all of you back, and wish you a safe and prosperous New Year. I also want to welcome Sen. Ed Tarver to our family." Sen. Johnson continued his address by paying tribute to Lt. Gov. Taylor, who is now in his last year as President of the Senate, stating, "He has been a fighter for the people of Georgia, he is a natural leader and a true public

Later in the day, Senators Jeff Mullis, Preston Smith and Don Thomas unveiled the new State of Georgia rug, which is manufactured in Northwest Georgia and given as a gift to each Senator during the yearly Dalton Night event. After a committee to notify Gov. Sonny Perdue that the Senate has convened was appointed, Majority Leader Tommie Williams then moved the Senate stand adjourned to end Day One of what is sure to be a very hectic and very productive 2006 session.



Spotlight on...Upcoming issues for 2006 Session



There are many significant issues facing the Georgia Senate as it convenes this month. Eminent domain, inverse condemnation, juvenile code, emerging technologies, home heating fuels and ethics in government are just some of the issues facing Georgia's citizens currently. This section will provide a few detailed "talking points" for the

2006 session, highlighting some important matters that will surely come up this year.

Eminent Domain

In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Kelo v. City of New London* dramatically broadened the traditional scope for takings of private property under eminent domain. During the 2005 General Assembly session, Senate Bill 86 was considered. It will likely be debated in 2006 whether a public purpose may be construed to include the exercise of eminent domain solely or primarily for the purpose of economic development. In addition, the Senate may also address inverse condemnation issues in 2006.

Illegal Immigration

Estimated at 350,000 illegal aliens in Georgia, illegal immigration has become a significant legislative issue. Consequently, there have been at least four bills introduced in the Senate that are designed to ensure that illegal aliens do not receive taxpayer-funded services in Georgia, including Senate Bills 170-172 and 336. Inversely, Senate Bill 368 was also filed to provide that the Board of Regents shall determine residency and admission requirements for state universities, rather than the General Assembly.

Sexual Predator Laws

Legislation has been introduced to expand Georgia's sexual offender laws to provide for tougher requirements such as additional verification and notification requirements for sexual offenders when they are released from prison, as well as new and increased penalties for sexual offender crimes. Recently, Senate Bills 372 and 377-379 were filed, which provide for a 25-year mandatory sentence for certain offenses against children, GPS monitoring of felons who have served their sentence, a "hostage code" for ATM users, and further restrictions on where convicted sexual offenders may reside following their release. Also, the Senate may examine "cyberstalking" laws to determine if they can be expanded.

Voter Identification

The General Assembly passed House Bill 244, otherwise known as the "Voter ID" bill, in 2005. One portion of House Bill 244 revises the forms of identification that are acceptable in order to register and to vote in Georgia. Since its passage, the Voter ID bill has become one of the more controversial pieces of legislation in recent years. In October of last year, a U.S. Federal District Court judge temporarily suspended enforcement of the law. The Senate may introduce a new version of the legislation during the 2006 session.

Electronic Voting & Paper Receipts

Recently, critics of touch-screen voting have called for a voter-verified paper audit trail after a series of reports questioned the security of electronic voting. Many assert that the machines can be manipulated to change the outcome of elections. Opponents of paper receipts have pointed out that spending approximately \$16 million to outfit Georgia's machines could prove unwise if different standards were later developed that made them obsolete. Senate Bill 367 has been introduced to require all electronic recording voting systems to produce a permanent paper record of the votes, and may come up for a vote in 2006.

Senate Spotlight recognizes... Linda Sammons and Barbara Landrum



The Georgia State Senate would like to extend its congratulations and best wishes to Senate secretaries Linda Sammons and Barbara Landrum upon their recent retirements.

Linda Sammons has worked for the state senate for 25 years, and her first assigned Senator at the Capitol was current Lieutenant Governor Mark Taylor. She has assisted many Senators in their everyday business throughout her tenure. Upon her retirement, she plans to spend time relaxing, playing with her grandchildren and enjoying her hobbies and personal interests.

Barbara Landrum first worked for Department of Family and Children Services in Newton County, and has since worked for Department of Labor, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Education and other state agencies. Barbara has worked for the General Assembly for 16 years, assisting Senators such as Jeff Mullis, Don Thomas and current U.S. Congressman Phil Gingrey. Upon her retirement, she plans to continue to work for the Senate on a contractual basis.



A retirement party was held on Thursday, January 5, to honor Linda and Barbara for their years of loyal service to the state senate. Many Senators and staff members enjoyed barbecue and cake, and celebrated Barbara and Linda's many years of hard work in the Senate. The Senate and its staff thank Linda and Barbara for their many years of service, and wish these long-serving ladies the best of luck in all their future endeavors!

Senate Budget's Spotlight on...Monthly Numbers



The revenue collected by the Department of Revenue for December 2005 was \$1.54 billion. This is an increase of 9.3 percent when compared to the revenue collected in December 2004 (\$1.41 billion).

The percentage increase year-to-date for Financial Year 2006 (FY06) is 8.2 percent when compared to Financial Year 2005 (FY05).

Most of the effect of the September sales tax suspension on gasoline was recognized in the October 2005 numbers, but there was some residual loss of revenue in the November 2005 numbers.



President Pro Tempore Eric Johnson and Secretary of the Senate Frank Eldridge presented each Senator with an "Official Senate Pin" on the first day of the 2006 Session. Many thanks to Senator Jim Whitehead for the use of his lapel for this photo.

Senate opens Press Conference Room



“First of all, I’d like to welcome all of you to our new press conference room,” said Senate President Pro Tempore Eric Johnson during a press conference announcing the appointment of Senators Seth Harp, Jack Hill, Michael Meyer von Bremen and Terrell Starr to the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee, which was created during the 2005 Legislative Session under House Bill 48.

Sen. Johnson’s press conference was the first to ever be held in the newly renovated Senate Press Conference room, which is located in Room 203 of the Paul C. Coverdell Legislative Office Building. The new Press Conference room is a state-of-the-art facility, which will provide all state senators with the latest and most modern tools

available to convey their messages, to give speeches and to make announcements to the media in Georgia. The room features a new speakers’ podium, chairs for the media and staff, a microphone, and a green wall behind the podium with a handcrafted state seal and flag, as well as the U.S. flag.

“Governor Perdue charged the legislature with passing comprehensive ethics reform. Under the new law, the Joint Legislative Ethics Committee has been created. This will allow the public to bring forward concerns about potential conflicts of interest within the legislature,” Sen. Johnson continued. President Pro Tem Johnson co-chairs the Joint Ethics Committee and made the appointments on the Senate side. “I am pleased to appoint members who are respected veterans and trusted by their colleagues on both sides of the aisle.”

All Senators are welcome to reserve time slots for their future press conferences on a first-come, first-serve basis. The Senate Press Conference Room is now the ideal venue for all press conferences, interviews, speeches, radio addresses or question-and-answer sessions. Please contact the Senate Information Office at (404) 656-0028 to set up a press event.

Mark your calendars...

Wednesday, January 11, 2006

State of the State Address, 3:00 pm, State Capitol

Monday, January 16, 2006

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday Observed

Wednesday, January 25, 2006

Georgia Environmental Council Legislative Reception, Interface Showroom in Atlanta, 6:00 pm-8:00 pm

Thursday, February 2, 2006

Savannah Night, 5:00 pm, Georgia Railroad Freight Depot

Employee Spotlight on... Betsy Howerton



What is your current job and/or assignments?

I am a Deputy Legislative Counsel for the Office of Legislative Counsel, and I have worked for the General Assembly since 2002. My main responsibilities are to help draft new legislation and to serve as legal staff for the House and Senate Education and Health committees. My other duties include writing opinion letters, conducting legal research and serving as staff for study committees. During the interim, our office is responsible for updating the

Georgia code and the Georgia Law books.

How did you end up at the General Assembly?

I have worked in Georgia state government since graduating from college. I worked in the legal office for the Department of Transportation, and then I worked for the Department of Education as a contract attorney. While working for DOE, I met another attorney who worked for the Office of Legislative Counsel, who told me that a position was available here. I have now been here for a little over three years, and the 2006 legislative session will be my fourth session.

Tell me a little about your background. Birthplace, brothers and sisters, etc.

I was born in Lexington, KY, but my family moved to Birmingham, AL when I was a teenager. My older brother still lives in Birmingham, and he's married and has a two-year-old son. I attended undergraduate school at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, where I earned a degree in civil engineering. Then, after moving to Atlanta, I worked for the DOT for three years until I decided to go to law school, earning my law degree at the University of Georgia. I now live in Decatur, GA, and I am a member of the Peachtree Road United Methodist Church.

What is something you would like to accomplish in the next 5-10 years?

Professionally, I would like to continue to work with the Office of Legislative Counsel in a positive, productive way to assist the members of the General Assembly and help Georgia continually progress with regard to its laws. On a personal level, I really hope to improve my tennis game!

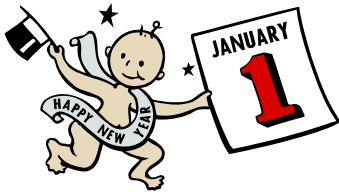
Tell us about your hobbies and/or what you enjoy doing away from work...

I have two dogs – Maddie and Mister X. They are both rescue projects of mine, and I really enjoy playing with them, and taking them for walks or going to the park. I am also an avid tennis player, and I play on two different tennis teams. Recently, I had my kitchen remodeled because I really enjoy cooking! I have taken cooking classes recently, and I've been trying out new recipes for Italian and French cuisine. I also enjoy gardening, traveling and being involved with my church, and I recently joined a book club as well.

The General Assembly can be an exciting place to work. What are some of the aspects of your position that you enjoy the most?

I find the process of government fascinating. I enjoy observing and being a part of the process of lawmaking. I have also enjoyed getting to know the members of the House and Senate, and having the opportunity to work directly with them to create legislation and to work on committees.

The Senate Spotlight . . . January Birthdays



HAPPY BIRTHDAY to . . .



*Senator **Robert Brown***
*Senator **Casey Cagle***
*Senator **Cecil Staton***
*Senator **Renee Unterman***
***Anna Boggs**- Senate Secretary*
***Vicki Gibbs**- Senate Secretary*
***James Duffy**- Fiscal Office*
***Charlotte Robinson**- Fiscal Office*
***Vickie Lochbaum**- Fiscal Office*
***Michael Bottoms**- IT Division*
***Jerry McCoy**- Fiscal Office*
***Betsy Howerton**- Legislative Counsel*
***Sewell Brumby**- Director, Legislative Counsel*
***Natasha Spurrier**- Legislative Counsel*
***James McCarthy**- IT Division*
***Glenn Morrison**- Budget Office*
Happy Belated Birthday to:
***Kim Crowell**- Senate Secretary*
***Helen Griffin**- Senate Secretary*
***Diana Hauser**- Senate Secretary*

January 30th
January 12th
January 26th
January 27th
January 11th
January 12th
January 5th
January 8th
January 18th
January 12th
January 20th
January 23rd
January 29th
January 29th
January 7th
January 7th

December 24th
December 25th
December 10th



A Happy New Year to all!

The Senate Information Office would like to take this opportunity to wish all Senators and Senate staff a very Happy New Year! We wish everyone well in 2006, and we hope to accomplish a great deal during the 2006 legislative session.

The Senate Spotlight is a product of the Senate Information Office. If you have a suggestion or a person you would like to be considered for the Senate Spotlight on Employees, please contact us at 404.656.0028.